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## Looking Twice at Illustrated Books

**Barbara A. Ward and Terrell A. Young**

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Illustrations often lure would-be readers into books. Illustrations in today's books do more than just provide a visual accompaniment to text. They can also establish setting, define and develop characters, provide differing viewpoints, extend or develop the plot, establish mood, and provide interesting asides (Tunnell & Jacobs, 2008). While it has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words, illustrations have the power to engage the reader and support the text. Today's books offer a wide range of illustrated formats guaranteed to attract readers with their sumptuous colors and painstaking details. The role of illustration varies from the traditional picture book with illustrations on every page to chapter books with illustrations sprinkled across several pages. In the case of graphic novels illustrations are at the heart of the books, carrying the text across vividly imagined panels. In addition, teachers are increasingly aware of the role of the visual literacy component in their students' developing literacy. Often they are amazed that their students see things in book illustrations that the teachers themselves missed, creating many interesting discussions and prompting teachers to take another look at the illustrations in books.

On the following page are some of our recent favorite illustrated books for children young and old.

## Grades PK-2

Ahlberg, Allan. (2007). *Previously*. Illustrated by Bruce Ingman.

Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.

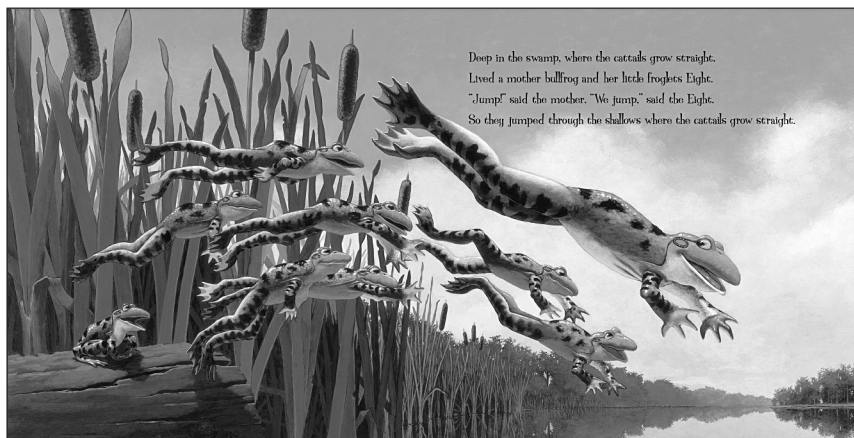
32 pages, \$16.99. ISBN 978-0-7636-3542-8.

Have you ever speculated about your favorite fairy-tale characters' activities before the "once upon a time?" Perhaps you have wondered what Jack and Jill were arguing about before going up the hill? Ahlberg explains what the characters were doing previously and helps readers see how their lives interconnect. Ingman's cartoon-like illustrations are the perfect complement to this delightful read-aloud tale.

Bateman, Donna M. (2007). *Deep in the swamp*. Illustrated by Brian Lies.

Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge. 32 pages, \$15.95, ISBN 1570915962.

With engaging, rhythmic patterns in the text and lush, greenish acrylic paintings that almost ooze with Southern humidity, this book depicts the animals and plants in the Okefenokee Swamp in an appealing fashion. The book would be perfect as a read-aloud for a science unit on swamps or ecosystems.



Beaty, Andrea. (2007). *Iggy Peck, architect*. Illustrated by David Roberts.

New York: Abrams. 32 pages, \$15.95, ISBN 0-81091106-x.

Ever since he was two, Iggy Peck has loved to build. Luckily for him, his understanding parents encouraged that creativity, and his love for architecture continues unabated until a second grade teacher tries to redirect his efforts. But Iggy gets his revenge when his skills are needed during the class picnic. Readers will love

the story of a creative spirit, accompanied by equally creative illustrations with lines and colors that pay tribute to the world of building.

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Cate, Annette LeBlanc. (2007). *The magic rabbit*.

Cambridge, MA: Candlewick. 32 pages, \$15.99, ISBN 978-0-7636-2672-3.

Street magician Ray loves his rabbit, Bunny, as they work and play together every day. One day, however, they are separated, and Bunny has to find his way back to Ray in a crowded, confusing city. The pen, ink, and watercolor illustrations lend a nostalgic, mysterious air to this engaging tale and the glittering yellow stars sprinkled across the pages will attract young readers just as quickly as they attract Bunny.

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Daly, Nikki. (2007). *Pretty Salma*.

New York: Clarion Books. \$16.00, 32 pages, ISBN 0618723455.

When her grandmother sends Salma to the market, she warns her about talking to strangers. But the wily Mr. Dog tricks her into chatting with him and giving up all of her possessions on the way home. The watercolor illustrations pulse vibrantly, and the artist has depicted the story's West African setting with careful detail and lovely colors. Daly's cautionary tale is blended with humor and attractive characters.

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Deedy, Carmen Agra. (2007). *Martina the beautiful cockroach: A Cuban folktale*.

Illustrated by Michael Austin.

Atlanta: Peachtree Press. 32 pages, \$16.95, ISBN 1-56145-399-3.

Elegant pastels depict the life and loves of Martina, a green cockroach who lives in a streetlamp in Cuba. When the time comes for Martina to choose a husband from among her suitors, her grandmother suggests that she use the coffee test to determine their temperaments. By spilling coffee on each suitor, she will be able to observe each one's reactions to something unpleasant. Martina's expressively drawn eyes and engaging demeanor will captivate readers young and old.



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Fleming, Denise. (2007). *Beetle bop*.

Orlando: Harcourt. 32 pages, \$16.00 ISBN: 978-0-15-205936-1.

In expressive text, Fleming introduces young readers to the characteristics and activities of beetles. "Chewing beetles, sawing beetles, noisily gnawing beetles." The rhythmic, simple text literally dances with Fleming's trademark illustrations, which are created by pouring colored cotton fiber into hand-cut stencils. Children will beg to hear this book read again and again.

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Kleven, Elisa. (2007). *The apple doll*.

New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 40 pages, \$16.00, ISBN: 0-374-30380-0.

Lizzy loves nothing more than playing in the apple tree in her yard. All year long, the tree provides her with lots of fun and adventure. Lizzy's world changes when it is time for her to begin school. Her mother teaches her how to make an apple doll. It is this doll that helps Lizzy overcome her shyness and make new friends at school. Kleven's watercolor illustrations are highlighted with bits of decorated paper collage to create comfy and inviting images.

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Worth, Valerie. (2007). *Animal poems*. Illustrated by Steve Jenkins.

New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux. 48 pages, \$17.00, 0-374-38057-0.

Is it the poems or the amazing cut-paper illustrations or their perfectly imagined partnership that makes this volume so appealing? Worth and Jenkins focus on twenty-three different animals in this memorable tribute to the fascinating creatures who share this world with us.

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Yaccarino, Dan. (2007). *Every Friday*.

New York: Henry Holt and Company. 32 pages, \$16.95, ISBN: 0-80507-724-3.

In a tribute to the Friday breakfasts the author/illustrator shares with his son Michael, he offers readers a rich slice of their life and what has become a family ritual. A father and his son take the time to stroll to their favorite restaurant for breakfast, savoring the sights, smells, and surroundings of their neighborhood along the way. The artist used gouache on watercolor paper to convey a sentimental feel to the book's illustrations and to remind readers that there's something special about quality time spent between parent and child.

## Grades 3-5

Bishop, Nic. (2007). *Nic Bishop spiders*.

New York: Scholastic. 48 pages, \$17.99, ISBN 0-439877563.

Readers will gasp at the amazing photographs that fill this eye-catching book. Bishop's use of a hand-built shutter and special flashguns combine with his infinite patience in waiting for just the right shot to create a book that kids and curious adults will be compelled to read more than once. The kid-friendly text will insure that readers will view the arachnid world in a different light.

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Judge, Lita. (2007). *One thousand tracings: Healing the wounds of World War II*.

New York: Hyperion. 40 pages, \$15.99, ISBN 1-423-10008-5.

The soft, watercolor illustrations add a depth of feeling and nostalgia to a time period when strangers helped other strangers, and the author's family rallied their neighbors to send supplies to the suffering Europeans during World War II. The story and the artwork including replicas of the tracings of feet sent to the author's family so that the right size of shoes could be mailed overseas lend an air of authenticity to the story and remind readers of the many individuals who suffer as the result of wartime conflict.

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Low, William. (2007). *Old Penn Station*.

New York: Henry Holt and Company. 40 pages, \$16.95, ISBN 0805079254.

The golden glow of the lamplight, the sweeping ceiling arches that reach for the sky, and the bustling human presence all fill the pages of this nostalgic look at the original Pennsylvania Station, a train terminal that once moved passengers through New York City. The author describes how the terminal was demolished to save money and to make room for a sports stadium, and as the reader sees every speck of the beautiful building destroyed Low leaves us filled with both an appreciation and a yearning for the beauty of yesterday. His sympathetic paintings, some of them spilling across two pages, are a combination of oil and digital creations, and the observant reader will notice his brushstrokes in the walls and shadows of the station.

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Miller, Kate. (2007). *Poems in black and white*.

Honesdale, PA: Wordsong/Boys Mill Press.

40 pages, \$17.95, ISBN 978-1-59078-412-9.

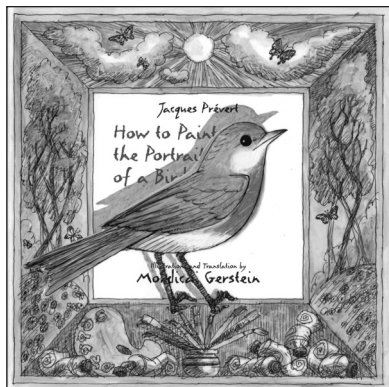
The monotype illustrations that cover the pages of this lovely book add a shimmering quality to the poems that celebrate the commonplace in our world: crows, bowling pins, the white in a mother's hair. Moment by moment, Miller finds something remarkable in the world around her and celebrates what she finds in words and art.

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Prevert, Jacques. (2007). *How to paint the portrait of a bird*.

Illustrated and translated by Mordicai Gerstein.

New York: Roaring Brook Press. 40 pages, \$16.95, ISBN 1596432152.



Who knows where inspiration comes from? This delightful poem and the accompanying illustrations offer one answer to that question and remind us that sometimes we must wait patiently for inspiration to come. Exploring the notions of art and creativity and the eternal appeal of Nature's beauty, the artist uses delicate colors juxtaposed with the bright blues and reds of a songbird perched on a boy's windowsill to fill the reader's senses.

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Strauss, Rochelle. (2007). *One well: The story of water on Earth*.

Illustrated by Rosemary Woods.

Tonawanda, NY: Kids Can Press. 32 pages, \$17.95, ISBN 1553379543.

The Asian tsunami in 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 reminded average citizens of the awesome power of water, and in this timely book, the author and illustrator pay tribute to the life-giving but not limitless quantity of water. The illustrator has dipped into her palette to spread blues of every color in the delicate illustrations that flow fluidly across two pages. The back matter offers tips for how young readers can conserve water and preserve the limited available water supply.

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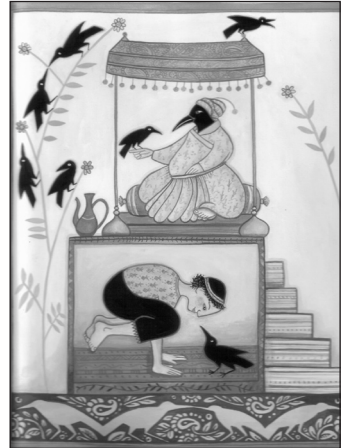
Wilson, Karma. (2007). *How to bake an American pie*. Illustrated by Raúl Colón. New York: McElderry Books. 40 pages, \$16.99. ISBN 0-689-86506-0.

Wilson's exemplary word choice makes this recipe for America a perfect anchor text. "Add purple mountain majesties. Measure out meekness and might. Pour cupfuls of courage, as much as you please; then leaven with dawn's early light." Colón's ink and watercolor illustrations enhance meaning when they are whisked in with Wilson's well-written text.

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Wong, Janet. (2007) *Twist: Yoga poems*. Illustrated by Julie Paschkis. New York: McElderry Books. \$16.99. ISBN 0-689-87394-8.

Twist is a collection of 16 poems—each about a different yoga pose. Wong employs lyrical language to create a poetic essence for the yoga positions. Paschkis's bright and beautiful watercolors present a mirror image for each poem. The illustrator's striking images of people of diverse ethnicities and body sizes were influenced by her study of Indian miniatures and paisley.



## Grades 6-8

Kinney, Jeff. (2008). *Diary of a wimpy kid: Rodrick rules*. New York: Amulet Books. 224 pages, \$12.95, ISBN 0810994739.

Middle school can be tough—especially when you begin the year with the “cheese touch” as is the case with Greg Heffley. Although he wants to forget the events from the last school year and the summer, his older brother Rodrick has no intention of letting him do so. The text, written in diary form, is lavishly supported with simple line drawings depicting Greg, Rodrick and his garage band, little brother Manny, their somewhat clueless parents, and Greg's classmates.



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Paulsen, Gary. (2007). *Hatchet*. Illustrated by Drew Willis.

New York: Simon and Schuster. 192 pages, \$19.99, ISBN: 1-4169-2508-2.

Since it was first published in 1987, the story of thirteen-year-old Brian Robeson's survival following a plane crash has become a modern classic. Stranded in the desolate Canadian wilderness, Brian uses his instincts and his hatchet to stay alive for fifty-four harrowing days. He learns to not only survive the wilderness but also the effects of his parents' divorce. This twentieth-anniversary edition of *Hatchet* contains a new introduction and sidebar commentary by Gary Paulsen, along with Drew Willis's detailed pen-and-ink illustrations that both complement the descriptions in the text and add a new dimension to the book.

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Selznick, Brian. (2007). *The invention of Hugo Cabret*.

New York: Scholastic. 544 pages, \$22.99, ISBN 0439813786.

Twelve-year-old orphan Hugo Cabret lives in the walls of a Paris train station at the beginning of the 20th century, spending his hours making sure the clocks are working. His life of secrecy ends though, when he meets a girl named



Isabelle who loves books. Before his death, Hugo's father, a clockmaker, had discovered an automaton in a museum where he worked. Hugo has a notebook in which he has recorded the inner workings of this automaton, a human-like robot ready to write a message. Many of the 284 pages are illustrations rendered in charcoal lending a filmic quality to the book, and readers can speed through the book's pages with ease.

The author/illustrator has said that he used a magnifying glass to complete the drawings, working in a one-quarter scale. The web links to filmmaker George Melies and automatons at the back of the book will guarantee that readers stay hooked on this topic.

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Tan, Shaun. (2007). *The arrival*.

New York: Scholastic/Arthur A. Levine Books.

128 pages, \$19.99, ISBN: 0-439-89529-4.

In this masterfully created wordless graphic novel, a man tearfully leaves his family for an unfamiliar place where he undergoes all sorts of confusing tests.

Unable to speak the language of his new home, he must communicate through gestures. He must also figure out what to eat and where to sleep, resorting to sketching to meet his basic needs. The book has a surreal quality about it, mirroring perfectly, with its tonal illustrations, the feeling of disorientation experienced by many immigrants entering a new country. The reader enters this confusing world from the book's first pages with endpapers including headshots of immigrants from many different countries and an inspection notice with odd-looking stamps and indecipherable marks.

## Grades 9-12

Abadis, Nick. (2007). *Laika*.

New York: Roaring Brook Press/First Second Books.

208 pages, \$17.95, ISBN 978-1-59643-101-0.

The engaging illustrations in this gripping graphic novel reveal the hope and despair that Laika, the first dog in space, experiences throughout her life and the pain and loneliness she endured during her preparation for her voyage into space. The artist brings to life the emotions that flit across the faces of the creatures, human and canine, at the heart of this powerfully imagined story of trust and betrayal. Three lives and three different purposes intertwine in the compelling story of Laika, Yelena, the lab technician who trained her, and Korolev, head of the Soviet space program responsible for sending Laika into space—and then leaving her there. Laika's sacrifice is made especially poignant with the realization that little scientific knowledge was gained as the result of the Soviets' experiments.




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Alexie, Sherman. (2007). *The absolutely true diary of a part-time Indian*.

Illustrated by Ellen Forney.

New York: Little, Brown, and Company. 240 pages, \$16.99, ISBN 0-316-01368-4.

Readers will wipe tears of laughter and sorrow, by turn, from their eyes as they read the mostly autobiographical story of Arnold (Junior) Spirit, a Spokane Indian with many health problems. When Junior leaves the reservation school for a

chance at a better education, he is swept up into the white world of his new school and feels caught between two very different cultures. The story is given additional appeal through the cartoonish illustrations that depict Arnold's sister Mary Runs Away and a culturally-confused Arnold, divided right down the middle between the white world he enters on a daily basis and the world of the reservation he returns home to every night.

### References

Tunnell, M. O., & Jacobs, J. S. (2008). *Children's literature, briefly*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.